Part 1 of this article focussed on the things to see along the track.
This time I'll cover at the practicalities of travel in this area and provides information to ensure a safe and enjoyable trip.

Accommodation

Marree – a good variety of accommodation is available. A caravan park has camping and caravan sites as well as cabins. The hotel has quite modern cabins available.
Clayton Wetlands – established by nearby Clayton Station, the wetlands are a result of a free flowing bore and provide a top camping spot. This is a spacious area so you won't be crowded. They have even created a hot artesian spa in a water tank. Toilets are available.
Mungerannie – home of the famous Mungerannie Hotel, there is a spacious camp ground along an extensive wetland, once again formed from a free-flowing bore. If the bones are aching, another warm artesian "hot tub" is available. There are also basic cabins for hire. Bird watchers will have a field day.
Birdsville – a good range of accommodation is available. An excellent caravan park has camping and powered sites as well as cabins. The famous Birdsville Hotel has a motel attached with all modern facilities.

Preparation

Despite the fact that this is a well-travelled track, especially in the cooler months, it is isolated with minimal services. Like all outback travel, top class preparation and self-sufficiency are the keys to an enjoyable experience providing positive memories for years to come. Here are some major factors to consider:

- **Food** – carry all food required to at least get you to Birdsville, with a couple of days extra supplies in case of breakdown. Birdsville has basic supplies with only a small store attached to the roadhouse.
- **Water** – don't rely on any access to water along the way, especially drinking water. Carry all you need, again ensuring extra in case of breakdown. Supplies can be replenished in Birdsville.
- **Shelter** – if you want cabins or hotel/motel accommodation, book ahead. Facilities are limited and can be booked out in the busy time of the year. There are plentiful camping opportunities along the way. If camping, an insect proof shelter can save many frayed tempers, flies can be a real problem.
- **Fires** – campfires are allowed most of the year, but firewood is rare. Carry your own.
- **Fuel** – Luckily there are not long distances between fuel stops so large amounts of extra fuel are not required. Once on the dirt, keep a close eye on the fuel gauge so that any puncture of a fuel tank is picked up quickly. Have some hole repair material handy that suits the material of your fuel tank and can be used with fuel leaking.
- **Tyres** – gibbers are tough on tyres. If your tyres are getting towards the end of their life, replace them before leaving. Carry at least two spares, a tyre repair kit and compressor, and know how to use them. Reduce tyre pressures around 20% from normal bitumen

pressures when on the dirt. Check out the Cooper Tires website for their excellent guide to tyre pressures.

- **Communication** – there is no mobile phone coverage along the track, so carry a good UHF radio as a minimum. Telstra do have a mobile phone signal in Birdsville.
- **Vehicle** – have your vehicle thoroughly checked before leaving and ensure your mechanic knows where you are heading so that everything is looked at. Be very aware of carrying as little gear as possible to avoid over-loading your vehicle. Try to pack light gear on a roof rack to keep the centre of gravity low. Ensure you do not exceed your vehicles legal Gross Vehicle Mass as insurance can be voided if an accident occurs as a result of over-loading.
- **Personal** – fly nets are a must – don't leave home without them! Good insect repellent is another must, especially if camping near water where mozzies can be a real problem. Have light weight clothes that cover arms and legs and always wear a hat in the sun – you can burn very quickly, even in the winter.
- **Caravans and Camper Trailers** – A good sturdy camper trailer will have no problems with this trek and yours will definitely not be the only one out there. Modern off-road caravans are becoming more common with the main track normally in pretty good condition.

Some Tips and Bush Etiquette

- **Approaching vehicles** – to avoid windscreen damage, slow down when another vehicle is approaching – you don't want a smashed windscreen out here.
- **Keep headlights on** – enormous clouds of dust will follow a vehicle in many areas. Make yourself as visible as possible with headlights on to avoid a head on crash.
- **Road trains** – triple road trains are not uncommon on the track, producing incredible dust clouds and sometimes trailers can weave about quite a bit. Slow right down and pull over as close as possible to the left. Don't speed up and move back onto the road until you can see if there is any more on-coming traffic. If travelling in convoy, ensure the leader warns the group and makes clear their intentions to pull over.
- **Station tracks** – do not travel down station tracks, even to find a camping spot. This is like driving into someone's driveway in the city.
- **Camping spots** – some of the best spots are alongside creeks where there are often some beautiful shady trees. Tracks can often be found leading to some flat, cleared areas.

Never camp in a creek bed as heavy rains many kilometres away can result in a sudden rush of water down what is normally a dry creek bed. Beware of camping under over-hanging limbs of large gum trees. These are prone to break without notice and people have been killed by the falling limb. Never camp near stock watering points as this scares stock away, leaving them without water.

- **Cook after dark** – the flies will go to bed after dark, making life a lot easier. Have some good lights that can provide enough light over the camp site without having to be right next to you. You will attract insects to the light rather than you. A good headlight is great when cooking and you need some intense light over your mouth-watering delight.
- **Driving through water** – After significant rain you will come across large pools of water spreading across the road. The temptation is to drive over to the edge as it appears the water is shallower. Don't. The pool exists because the road surface under the water is hard, but the edges are generally soft and often consist of deep mud. Use a low gear and drive steadily right through the middle of the pool.
- **Animal hazards** – much of this track is un-fenced so keep a constant eye out for wandering stock. Kangaroos and emus can also be a hazard so keep the speed down and avoid having to make sudden direction changes on the dirt road. Quite often large wedge-tail eagles can be seen feasting on a dead carcass on the road. Slow right down and sound your horn. These birds, especially with a belly full of fresh meat, are slow to fly off and potentially can fly right into your vehicle causing significant damage and trauma to your passengers. One way to occupy your passengers is to rotate sitting in the front passenger seat and this person has the important role of the official animal spotter.
- **Times to avoid** (maybe) – the Birdsville races are held usually in early September. If you love outback races, huge crowds and camping in close quarters, this won't worry you. However, if this is not your scene, avoid this time. Birdsville is often the in place to go for the many charity "bashes" that criss-cross the country. Again, these can swell numbers in town and put pressure on facilities. To avoid these, do your research or, better still, contact the Visitor Information Centre.

Where To From Here

Despite its isolation, there are a number of alternatives to either head home or continue on to other places.

- **North**
  - Take the Eyre Developmental Road to Bedourie and Boulia, then head west on the Donahue Highway (don't be fooled by the name – I would not recommend this for conventional vehicles) to Alice Springs or further north on the Diamantina Developmental Road to Mt. Isa.
- **South**
  - Head back down the Birdsville Track but take the alternative track (Inside or Outside), assuming the Inside Track (4WD recommended) is open.

- Take the Walkers Crossing Track (if open) to Innamincka and continue south on the Strezlecki Track (the subject of a future blog). This track is only suitable for 4WD vehicles.
- Go east along the Birdsville Developmental Road for 222km and then turn south on to the Cordillo Downs Road and on to Innamincka. This track can be very rough.

- **East**
  - The Birdsville Developmental Road joins the Diamantina Developmental Road and heading east will lead to Windorah, Quilpie and Charleville.
- **West**
  - The only option here is a Simpson Desert Crossing, not to be undertaken lightly. See "Crossing the Simpson Desert – Parts 1-3" for comprehensive information. Definitely high clearance 4WD only.

Distances and Services

Fuel: U = unleaded D = diesel L = LPG
Accommodation: CP = caravan park H = hotel/motel C = cabin

	Distance from Pt Augusta	Fuel	Accommodation	Public Toilets
Quorn	41	U,D,L	CP,H,C	Y
Hawker	107	U,D,L	CP,H,C	Y
Leigh Creek	260	U,D,L	CP,H,C	Y
Copley	264	U,D	CP,H,C	Y
Lyndhurst	297	U,D,L	CP,H,C	Y
Marree	377	U,D	CP,H,C	Y
Mungerannie	583	U,D	C,Camping	Y
Birdsville	898	U,D	CP,H,C	Y

N.B. there is no LPG fuel available beyond Lyndhurst.
Download the Birdsville Track Distances and Services PDF

Maps

Hema Maps Great Desert Treks–South East
Royal Automobile Association of S.A. – Flinders Ranges and Outback